

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for the extensive efforts in pointing out the minor errors to be corrected in the drawings and specification. The following remarks respond to each of the points raised in the Office Action.

Responsive to the objections to the drawings, the requested changes have been made.

Responsive to the objections to the specification, the requested changes have been made.

Responsive to the objections to the claims, to the extent that the claims remain in the application, they have been amended as requested.

Responsive to the rejections of Claims under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, each of the objected to phrases have either been canceled or amended to avoid the objections raised.

The rejection of originally presented Claims 1, 2, 5, and 26-30 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Naert '991, is hereby traversed and reconsideration thereof is respectfully requested. Claims 1 and 2 have been canceled. The subject matter of Claim 1 has been included in different form corresponding to a combination of original Claim 1 and dependent Claim 5, in the form of newly added independent Claim 45. It is submitted that this newly presented Claim 45 is novel as compared to the arrangement disclosed in Naert '991. As indicated in the Office Action, Naert '991 is contending as having a floor structure 12 joining the front and rear panel structures, this floor structure 12

appearing as a wheel cut out. Thus, the rear panel structure would be that portion of the floor behind the floor structure 12, which rear panel structure does not include the recited vertical panel section and the horizontal panel section extending rearwardly from the vertical panel section. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of this Claim 45 is submitted as in order and respectfully requested. As to Claims 26-28, they have been amended to depend from the allowable Claim 6.

Each of Claims 29 and 30 have been amended to recite the feature indicated as allowable with respect to original Claim 8.

The rejection of originally presented Claims 3, 4, 9, and 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Naert '991 over Bartsch et al. '873 is hereby traversed and reconsideration thereof is respectfully requested. Claims 3 and 4 have been canceled and Claims 9 and 10 have been amended to be dependent upon respective allowable Claims 6 and 8. Accordingly, this rejection should no longer apply.

The rejection of Claims 9, 12, and 31 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Naert '991 in view of Rackham '715, is hereby traversed and reconsideration thereof is respectfully requested. By this amendment, Claim 9 has been amended to depend upon allowable Claim 6; Claim 12 has been amended to depend upon allowable Claim 11, and Claim 31 depends from amended Claim 30 which now includes features from allowable Claim 8

regarding the local thickening in the floor structure as a base for vehicle operating pedals. Accordingly, this rejection should no longer apply.

The rejection of Claims 19, 33, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Naert '991 in view of Genma et al. '049, is hereby traversed and reconsideration thereof is respectfully requested. Claim 19 has been amended to depend indirectly from Claim 11, indicated as allowable; Claim 33 depends from Claim 30 which now includes the feature indicated as allowable from Claim 8 regarding the thickening in the floor structure; and Claim 34 has been canceled. Accordingly, this rejection should no longer apply.

By this amendment, the claims have been formulated to present allowable claims in independent form, namely, Claims 6, 8, 11, 13, 20, 24, and 25. Newly added Claims 39-44 depend from these claims and recite the fiber-reinforced plastic material feature.

As discussed above, newly added Claim 45 recites features from original Claims 1 and 5, which should place this claim in allowable form as none of the references disclose or suggest the combination of features presented. Likewise, newly independent Claim 47, includes the limitation of Claim 45, along with the limitations of originally presented dependent Claim 3. Lastly, new independent Claim 50 includes the feature indicated as allowable from original Claim 8, but without the limitation of intermediate dependent Claim 3.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration and favorable action on all the claims is submitted as in order and respectfully requested.

If there are any questions regarding this amendment or the application in general, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated since this should expedite the prosecution of the application for all concerned.

If necessary to effect a timely response, this paper should be considered as a petition for an Extension of Time sufficient to effect a timely response, and please charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 05-1323 (Docket No.: 028987.52313US).

Respectfully submitted,



Donald D. Evenson
Registration No. 26,160

July 23, 2004

CROWELL & MORING LLP
Intellectual Property Group
P.O. Box 14300
Washington, DC 20044-4300
Telephone No.: (202) 624-2500
Facsimile No.: (202) 628-8844
DDE:alw

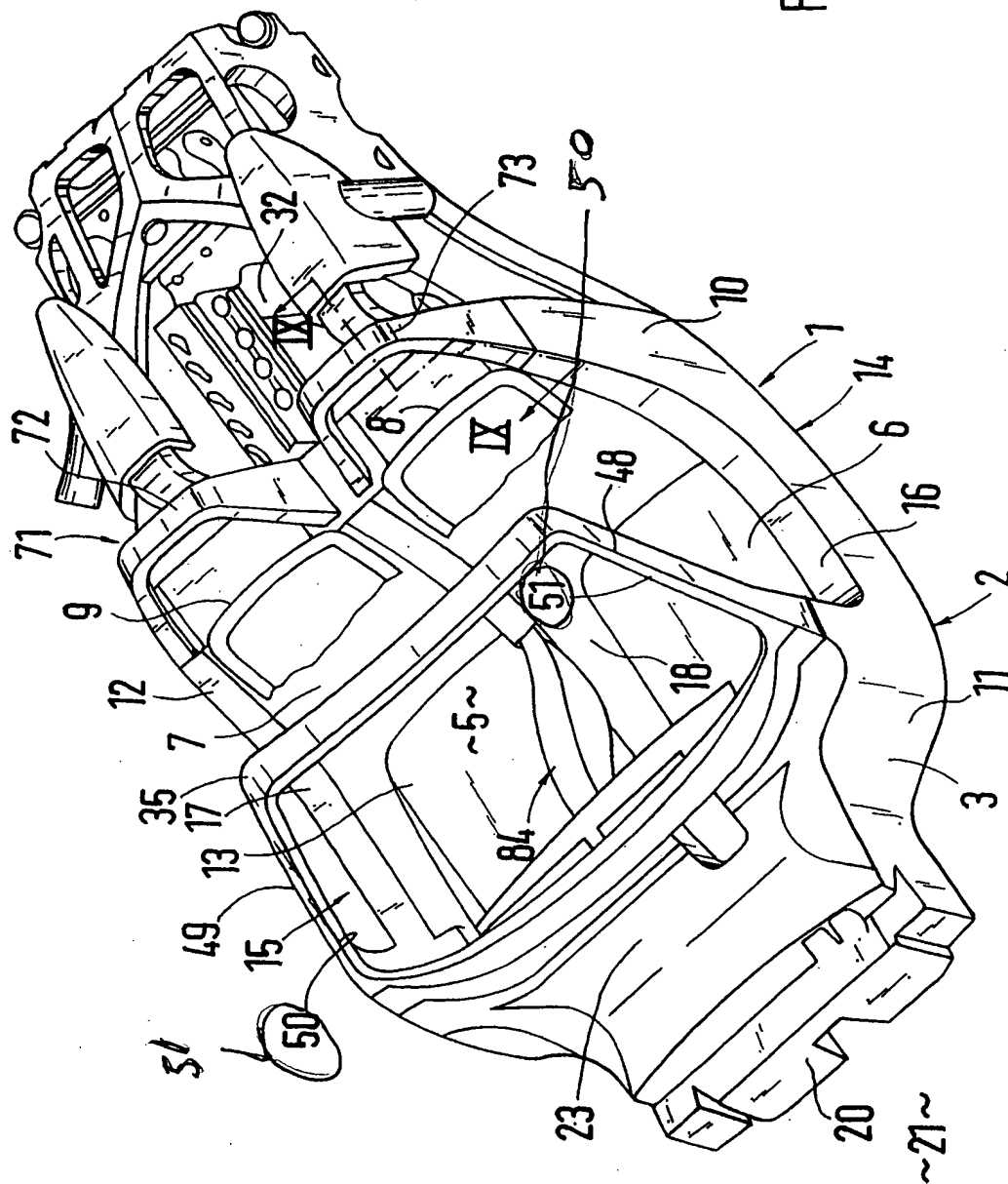


Fig. 2

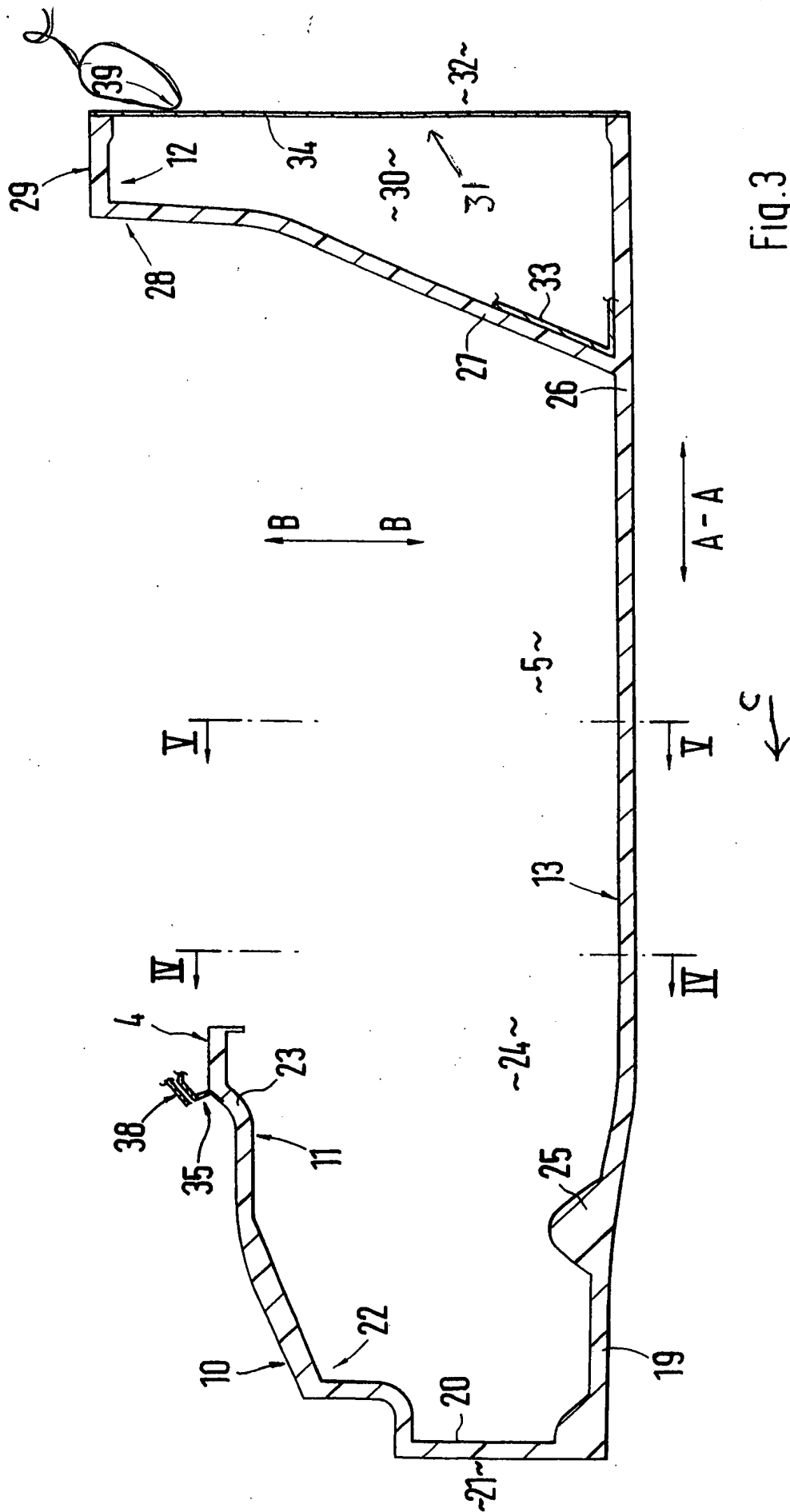


Fig. 3

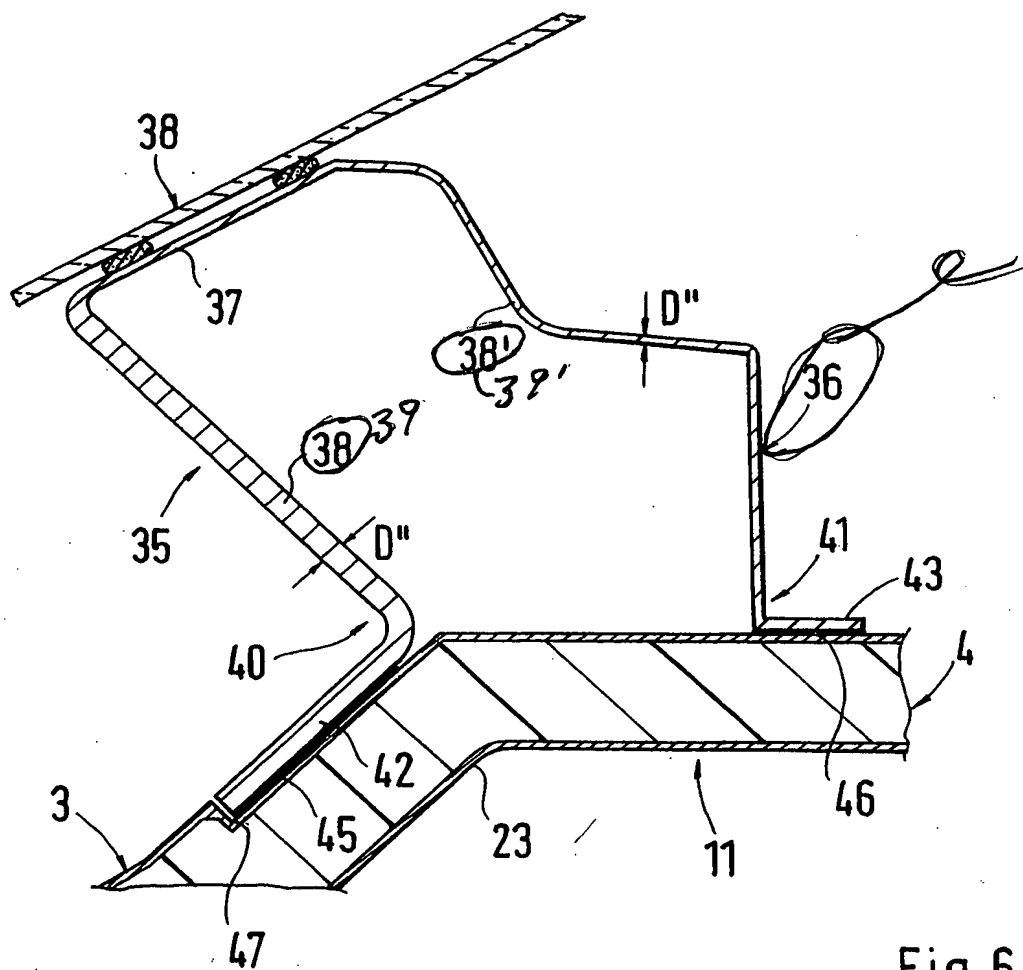


Fig.6

